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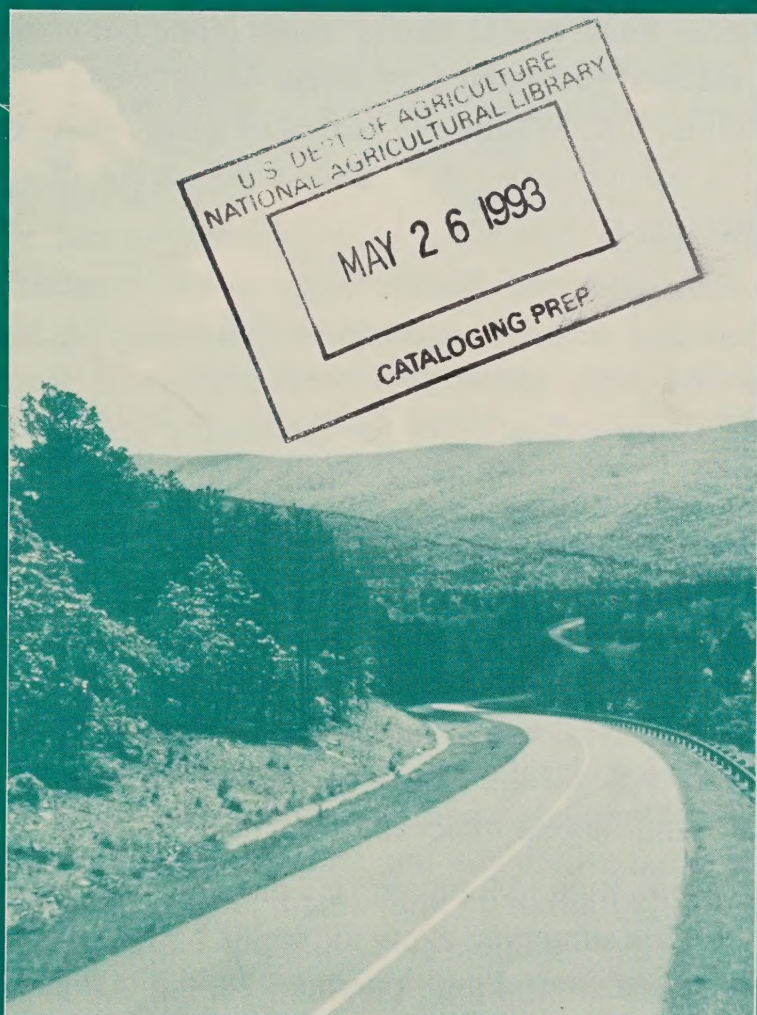
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# Talimena Scenic Byway

## Ouachita National Forest



## Arkansas - Oklahoma



United States Department of Agriculture



## View The Countryside

*Here's the auto tour you've been waiting for, where a winding mountaintop drive opens a showcase of enchanting natural beauty and extraordinary views. Wide valleys and majestic peaks stretching to the horizon mirror the changing colors and moods of the South's four distinctive seasons.*

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Spanning the highest mountain range between the Appalachians and the Rockies, the 54-mile Talimena Scenic Byway opens a showcase of natural beauty during each of the south's four distinctive seasons. One breathtaking panorama follows another as this national forest scenic byway winds along the crests of forested mountains between Mena, AR, and Talihina, OK. Whether in search of quiet beauty or active participation, this mountaintop drive offers something special around every turn.

The Ouachita Mountains, one of America's oldest land masses, are unique because they stretch east and west, rather than north and south. Rock glaciers are indicative of the fascinating geological history of these mountains. More than 2,500 native plant species and a diversity of wildlife species may be found here.

Just north of the town of Mena, the scenic byway meanders westward along the crest of Rich Mountain past a historical fire tower. At 2,681 feet, this is the highest peak on the Ouachita National Forest, the oldest and largest national forest in the South.

Atop Rich Mountain is one of the more picturesque attractions along the scenic byway, Queen Wilhelmina State Park, operated by the Arkansas Parks Department. The park offers a picnic area, miniature scenic railroad, animal park, miniature golf course near the campground and interpretive naturalist program.

The most popular feature is the historic hotel, Queen Wilhelmina Inn. Destroyed by fire in 1973, the Inn has been reconstructed in a style that reflects its stately history. Guest accommodations, a



*Vistas offer panorama views.*

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restaurant and meeting room make it an ideal stop for travelers.

Continuing westward, Pioneer Cemetery is the next historical site before crossing the state line into Oklahoma. Part of the rugged Ouachita National Recreation Trail parallels the scenic byway here and then retreats into the valley below.

Almost midpoint on the scenic byway, the Kerr Nature Center nestles between the mountains. This interpretive complex serves as an outdoor laboratory designed to stimulate the visitor's curiosity and awareness of the environment. The Kerr Nature Center, exhibit pavilion and self-guided trails interpret the natural world of the forest for general visitors, students and teachers. Educational, scientific, cultural and recreational concepts are presented to promote development and growth of young and old alike.

Two miles west of the nature center, the scenic byway crosses U.S. Highway 259 before beginning its climb along the spine of Winding Stair Mountains. Here, Emerald Vista provides a spectacular sweeping view of the Poteau River Valley, Lake Wister and Cedar Lake Recreation Area. This recreation area, situated on the shores of a beautiful 90-acre lake, is





*Discover nature at the Kerr Center.*

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only a few miles north of the scenic byway. Camping, swimming, picnicking, fishing, and both interpretive and equestrian trails are available.

Adjacent to Emerald Vista, Winding Stair Campground offers facilities for overnight camping, with tent and camper spaces and restrooms.

Continuing along the ridge of Winding Stair Mountain, the byway passes Horsethief Springs and Old Military Road Historical Sites before coming to an end near the town of Talihina, OK. Located 2 miles south of the scenic byway on U.S. 271 is Talimena State Park, offering camping (with hookups), picnicking, hiking and playground facilities.

Billy Creek Recreation Area, a few miles south of the scenic byway along OK Highway 63, features camping, picnicking, fishing and hiking in an attractive forest setting.

Visitor information stations are at each end of the scenic byway -- Mena in Arkansas, and near Talihina, OK. They are open daily from April through November. Brochures, maps and interpretive information are available to open gates of learning and enhance your enjoyment of the forest environment.



## Discover Special Places

*These special areas, the undiscovered treasures of the National Forest System, feature a wide variety of recreation attractions and outstanding scenery. Since 1965, Congress has identified "special areas" in national forests as national recreation areas, national scenic areas, and national monuments.*

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The Winding Stair Mountain National Recreation Area (NRA) and six other designated areas in Oklahoma combine to offer the public a full range of recreational, educational and scenic opportunities on the western side of the Forest. The NRA, designated by President Ronald Reagan in 1988, has more than 150 campsites, a 90-acre lake, an equestrian camp, a 45-mile stretch of the Ouachita National Recreation Trail, and many miles of equestrian, interpretive and other hiking trails that beckon outdoor enthusiasts to the scenic beauty found in eastern Oklahoma. The NRA lies on both sides of the Talimena Scenic Byway.

The other designated areas in Oklahoma, established in the same legislation as the NRA, preserve wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. They consist of the Indian Nations Scenic and Wildlife Area, Beech Creek National Scenic and Botanical Areas, and the Black Fork Mountains and Kiamichi River wildernesses. These areas were set aside because they possess unique scenic and wildlife qualities, and unique plant and tree species and plant communities.

The trails systems on the Ouachita Forest includes hiking, interpretive, and equestrian trails and related facilities. Hiking and interpretive trails range in lengths of less than 1 mile up to the 192 miles of the Ouachita National Recreation Trail, which traverses the entire forest from east to west, from Talimena State Park, OK, to Highway 9 near Little Rock, AR. The trail crisscrosses the length of the scenic byway, providing several trailhead parking areas. Many miles of equestrian trails are available for the enjoyment of horseback riders as well. Some trails are available for a variety of use (horses, mountain bikes, ORV), while others are single use. Check with the local Forest Service office for information before your trip.





### Visitor Information Stations

Begin your auto tour with a stop at the information stations at each end of the byway. These stations provide exhibits, maps, brochures and directions to orient you to the scenic byway and the Ouachita National Forest.





## *Savor the History*

The 1.6 million-acre Ouachita National Forest is the South's oldest and largest national forest. Public demands to save the Nation's timber and water resources prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to proclaim, in 1907, what was first known as the Arkansas National Forest. In 1926, President Calvin Coolidge changed the name to Ouachita, after the mountain range.

Rich in history, the rugged Ouachita Mountains were the scenic backdrop for the native Indians' encounter with Hernando de Soto's party of Spaniards in 1541. French explorers followed, flavoring the region with names like Fourche la Pave River. In fact "Ouachita" is the French way of spelling the sound of the Indian word "Washita," which means "good hunting grounds."

Visitors are invited to enjoy such outdoor pleasures as picnicking, camping, hiking, horseback riding, swimming, fishing, hunting and boating on the forest. Native flora and fauna beckon the student of nature as well as the camera buff, and the forest's complex geology makes it a rock hound's paradise. There are 33 developed recreation areas, 7 scenic areas, 43 vistas, 4 float camps, 11 shooting ranges, 2 historical sites, 7 wildernesses, 1 national recreation area, and 480 miles of trails in the Ouachita National Forest. Located in west-central Arkansas and southeast Oklahoma, the forest offers visitors a myriad of opportunities for either one-day trips or extended vacations filled with relaxation and enjoyment.

For more information about recreation, hiking and trails on your national forest, contact:



Supervisor's Office  
Ouachita National Forest  
P. O. Box 1270  
Hot Springs, AR 71902  
(501) 321-5202

Mena Ranger District  
Route 3, Box 220  
Highway 71N  
Mena, AR 71953  
(501) 394-2382

Choctaw Ranger District  
HC-64 Box 3467  
Heavener, OK 74937  
(918) 653-2991

Kiamichi Ranger District  
P. O. Box 577  
Talihina, OK 74571  
(918) 567-2326

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